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"CALL YOUR JESUS TO COME DOWN AND HELP YOU"

After the recent spade of demonstrations and unrests amongst SMP and SMA students in Dili and Baucau, a wave of arrests and improvments has followed. The following interview was conducted with one of the arrested students whose case became known to the authorities of the Church. His story could stand for the many cases of arrest occuring in East Timor at present: for Talofo's, Eustáquio's, Chico's, João Bosco Hau's and the many other unknown or unnamed people.

ABILIO MESQUITA, Dili Christmas 1990.

"The Indonesian military started following me on 5th October. I must have come to the attention of the Indonesians through my participation in a number of previous demonstrations, like during the Pope's visit, the Americam Ambassador's inquiry into the Human Rights situation in East Timor and especially during a Mass celebrated by the Nuncio of the Vatican Embassy in rememberance of the foundation of the East Timor diocesis 50 years ago, on the 4th September 1990. Indonesian soldiers in civil clothes had come to my parents' house, in a suburb of Dili, questioning them about my whereabouts. My parents denied all knowledge of me. I, however, became so alarmed about their visit that I ran away. A visit of this nature in East Timor means only one thing: arrest.

I fled to the Motael Church, in the centre of Dili, and asked the 2 priests present, Father Ricardo and Father Cunha, for protection. They kindly took me in, and I found that already other students had asked for the same thing. About 20 of us lived in the priest's residence for 3 weeks, hiding from the military.

On 29th October I left the priest's residence going to Audian, in the Eastern part of the town to see friends of mine there. While being there I was detected by the Indonesian military who surrounded the house and then arrested me. That was around 9.00 in the evening. Present during the arrest were two friends of mine, Rodolfo and Agostinho, who witnessed the whole thing. The house had already been locked up for the night, when the soldiers came and surrounded the house. They at once broke down the front door. There were about 20 soldiers involved in the raid. They pushed me roughly out of the house. Outside they first beat me up, then handcuffed me and finally threw me into their car, a Kijang belonging to the military.

They drove me to Farol, one of the military interrogation places which they call Senopati II (in reference to the center of intelligence in Jakarta, called Senopati). There they took me to a big room, took off my clothes and immediately proceeded to apply electric shocks to my body. They also punched and beat me very badly, until blood was running from my face and and head. They beat my whole body with an iron rod. They then began to

interrogate me. (They nowadays commonly use this method, beating up the detainee first befora they ask any questions. The detainee by then is already in a state of deep shock, fear and pain and more pliable).

Their interrogation was about my involvement in the demonstrations and they were especially interested in who had put me up to these demonstrations. They tried to implicate Father Ricardo and the Bishop of East Timor, repeating over and over again that it was they who had ordered me to organise the demonstration. I denied this and sais: No, I had joined the demonstration, because I was conscious of what was going on East Timor, the atrocities and the injustices against innocent people. I had joined by my own free will and without influence from anyone else and because I wanted to defend the right of independence for the people of East Timor. As an answer they took the iron rod again and kicked and punched me repeatedly and then finally took a large stone smashing it on my head. Blood was streaming down my face and I fell over. While lying on the ground they took a rifle butt and smashed it into my face, and from this my right jaw broke. In agony I shouted: "Oh Jesus", and they in answer mocked me saying: "you go and call your Jesus to come down and help you". I wanted to cry but no tears came. In the same room were two more Timorese students being tortured and beaten in the same manner, one of them was called Chico and the other Eustáquio. The latter was also bleeding profusely from his headwounds and body injuries.

After the Indonesians saw the massive blood losses they stopped beating us, led us out of the room and took us to the police office. They did not dress our wounds there or brought us to the hospital for treatment, but rather undressed us again and began to torture all 3 of us again in the same room. They used the same methods as at Farol, punching, kicking and beating us constantly and brutally.

For four full days this treatment continued in the same manner: before interrogation we were regularly beaten with the iron rod, kicked by their big military boots, punched and tortured with electric shocks by 2 military officers and then brought back to our cells in Senopati II without any medical attention.
In this way I spent 4 days in excruciating pain coming from my broken jaw. We were covered in blood.

Perhaps the military officers thought that many of our bones were broken and were shocked at our sight, when on 2 November they took two of us (Eustáquio and me, Abílio) to the military hospital to be treated. At our arrival we were examined and X-rayed by an Indonesian military doctor who diagnosed that my jaw was broken. None of Eustáquio's bones were broken, only badly bruised and very swollen. He was sent back, while I was allowed to stay at the hospital. However, I was neither treated for my fracture and the many other wounds nor given anything to eat or drink for eight days. Blood was still trickling from my head, and I could swollow the blood inside my mouth only with difficulty.

On 9th November my mother went to Father Ricardo to request that he would accompany her to Panglima, the High Commander of the Army

in East Timor, to give her permission to visit me at the hospital. This she was granted. However, when they arrived at the hospital they were not allowed in, and only after some phonecalls between the Panglima and Father Ricardo they were finally permitted to enter the hospital. During that visit I was for the first time treated and given food and medicine. But as soon as my mother and Father Ricardo had left the hospital again they started beating me again until I was bleeding. I was also tied to the bed so as to not run away from the hospital. The same happened to Talofo, the other young man who had been tortured with me and who hadalso been admitted to the hospital.

The next thing I remember is the Bishop (Belo) visiting me at the hospital. He was accompanied by the Police Commander. He asked me who had taken me to the hospital. I could not name anyone. (The student was probably too afraid to give anu details). He then asked me what instruments of torture had been used in the whole process of intimidation and coercion, and I described them to him: iron rods, boots, fists, rocks, electric shocks. The Bishop then asked me when the operation on my jaw would be performed, to which the doctor'standing beside the bed answered: "Next Saturday, but it is very expensive and will cost 500.000 rupiah". The Bishop immediately volunteered to pay for the costs saying "this is my responsibility". The operation took place on 24th November (22 days after the injury) at the instigation of my mother and Father Ricardo and because of the Bishop offering to pay for it. They wired up my teeth and said I needed 1 month until the wire could be removed from my mouth.

When I was arrived on 24th December at the hospital the doctors demanded another 800.000 rupiah for the removal of the metal in my mouth, which naturally I did not have. I asked my mother where we would be able to take the money from, saying: "Mother, they firstly arrest me like a thief, beat me nad break my bones and after already taking 500.000 rupiah from us they are asking for 800.000 rupiah more. Where shall we take the money from?" My mother had nothing to reply. They stopped giving me any more medicine at the hospital, because I could not pay for it.

Still in hospital, after 24th December, I was visited by the Red Cross who tried to establish the same facts as already the Bishop had asked. (Who had beaten me and what instruments had been used). After the departure of the Red Cross people military officers appeared at my bed again, asking me what questions I had been asked and what answers I had given. They asked: "Who else has visited you and Talofo? Father Ricardo? Father Locatelli? The Bishop, your Vice President?" (an obvious mockery). They became very angry, indeed and again threatened me when I told them what I had spoken about with the Red Cross: the lack of treatment amd medicine, the beatings, the instruments and the torture. They replied to that: "You have been very foolhardy to have told all these things to the Red Cross. May be, you Timorese are winning, but before that we will kill all of you". To this I said: "Sir, you can kill all of us, but even if there is just one Timorese left, we will achieve independence". The officer replied: "You are very audacious", and to this I said: "Yes, I am brave, and if you want to kill me, I am ready to die". For this they beat me anew

and said: "You are against the nation". I replied: "I am speaking the truth and I am defending the right of the people of East Timor".

At night they came to my hospital bed and took me out into the night, threatening to kill me. However, since so many people know of my story they perhaps did not dare carry out their threat and took me back to my bed in the end.

Today I am still confined to the hospital, my jaw is hanging in a strange position and I am still very sick from all the beatings".

NOTE:

This interview was conducted over the Christmas period when the hospital allowed the "patient" to leave the place for a few days to celebrate Christmas with his family. Today he is back in the military hospital, waiting for his trial. What kind of crime are they going to accuse of?

23 January 1991